

Social Security Advisory Board convenes, prepares to address program policy issues

A new Social Security Advisory Board convened for the first time on February 9 of this year. The 1994 legislation that made the Social Security Administration an independent agency also created an Advisory Board. This seven member board advises the Commissioner of Social Security on policies related to the old-age, survivors, and disability insurance programs, and to the Supplemental Security Income program.

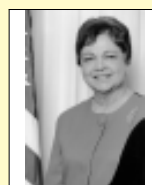
The law requires the Board to meet at least quarterly, but the Board can convene as frequently as circumstances warrant.

Shirley S. Chater, Commissioner of Social Security, says, "I expect the Advisory Board to provide valuable advice and counsel on a myriad of policy issues that confront the Social Security program. I look forward to working closely with them in the months and years ahead."

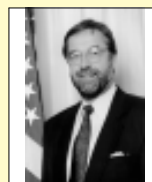
Advisory Board Members



Harlan Mathews (Chairman)—Mr. Mathews served as a member of the United States Senate from January 1993 until December 1994. Senator Mathews also served as the Secretary of the Cabinet of the Governor of Tennessee, and as State Treasurer of Tennessee.



Martha Keys—Ms. Keys is Vice President of Public Affairs for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, and previously served as Congresswoman from Kansas.



Gerald M. Shea—Mr. Shea is the Assistant to the President of the AFL-CIO.



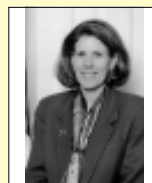
William C. Brooks—Mr. Brooks is Vice President of Corporate Relations at General Motors Corporation, and also serves as Chairman of GM's Contributions Planning Board and the GM Foundation.



Arthur "Pete" Singleton—Mr. Singleton is the former minority staff director of the United States House Ways and Means Committee.



Lori Hansen—Ms. Hansen is a policy analyst for the National Academy of Social Insurance.



Carolyn Weaver—Ms. Weaver is Director of Social Security and Pension Studies and Resident Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.



Social Security seeks providers of vocational rehabilitation services

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is trying to reach as many of the nation's providers of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services as possible to inform them of a new opportunity to serve thousands of potential clients.

SSA is embarking on a new approach to providing employment and VR services to people who receive disability benefits under the Social Security disability insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs. This new approach will expand the pool of providers who serve people with disabilities and thus allow more of these beneficiaries to receive the help they need to return to work or enter the workforce for the first time.

As a result of regulations published in March 1994, VR service providers in the public and private sectors are now eligible to serve Social Security beneficiaries who are not served by the State VR agencies. Approved providers, called "alternate participants," can be paid by SSA for the costs they incur in cases where their services help Social Security beneficiaries obtain and retain jobs at certain wage levels.

To begin the process of signing up alternate participants, SSA mailed a presolicitation an-

nouncement on February 12 of this year to more than 500 potential providers who had previously contacted the agency regarding participating in its VR program. SSA also published a synopsis of this notice in the Commerce Business Daily to assure that other potential providers are informed of the opportunity to take part in SSA's VR programs.

This same synopsis will also be available for download from the SSA Acquisition Data and Information Exchange (SADIE) Bulletin Board System. Interested parties should dial (410) 966-4889 within the Baltimore, Md. area, or 1-800-SSA-SELL for access. Modems should be set to 8 data bits, no parity, 1 stop bit (8-N-1), full duplex, and VT-100 or ANSI terminal emulation. Further instructions are available online. For technical assistance call (410) 965-8096.

The presolicitation notice contains background about SSA's VR Payment Programs, describes the basic qualifications to be considered as an alternate participant, discusses how alternate participants can be paid for the costs of their services to Social Security clients, and describes other features of the VR program. All providers of VR services who are interested in participating in SSA's VR pro-

grams are invited to respond to the notice. They should indicate their interest by responding to:

Social Security Administration
Office of Acquisitions and
Grants
Division of Programs
Contracts
Attention: Wayne McDonald
1710 Gwynn Oak Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21207

In early April, SSA will release a request for proposal (RFP) to all providers who responded to this initial notice. The RFP will go into more detail about SSA's VR program and will invite all interested providers to submit proposals to become alternate participants. Providers will be required to submit proof of their qualifications with their proposals. Based on these proposals, SSA will enter into negotiated contracts with all qualified providers.

"SSA is excited about this new approach to its VR program," says Susan Daniels, Associate Commissioner for Disability. "We are confident that as the provider base expands, more people with disabilities will get the employment and rehabilitation services they need to lead more productive and independent lives."



Not all non-citizens in U.S. need a Social Security number

Most people from other countries who come to live in the United States for any length of time are here to work. They, of course, need a Social Security number.

But there are other non-citizens in the U.S. who may not need a Social Security number—students being the most common example. This distinction is important for business owners, school officials, banking institutions, and other organizations.

Social Security Courier is designed to provide timely and relevant information on the retirement, survivors, disability, and Supplemental Security Income programs as well as important Medicare Information.

Each issue of *Social Security Courier* will contain items that should be, in whole or in part, of interest to your constituency. The camera-ready format is designed for easy reprint in your newsletter. Permission to reprint articles, giving credit to the Social Security Administration, is granted. We would appreciate your sending tearsheets.

We welcome your comments and invite suggestions for future editions. Please direct your correspondence to Editor, *Social Security Courier*, Room 4-J-10 West High Rise, 6401 Security Boulevard, Baltimore, MD 21235.

For example, an alien without a work permit doesn't need a Social Security number to—

- register for school; or
- conduct business with a bank or financial institution. (The bank will ask that they complete IRS form W-8.)

However, there are a few laws that require aliens to have a Social Security number even if they don't work. For example, they need a Social Security number to be listed as a dependent on a tax return or enlist in the U.S. military service.

Some state and local laws and regulations may also require that aliens without work permits have a Social Security number. Social Security can issue a Social Security number for nonwork purposes if the individual brings a letter from the government agency that requires him or her to have a Social Security number. The letter must be on letterhead stationary (not form letters or photocopies). It must specifically identify the applicant, and cite the law requiring the Social Security number.

Social Security offers a basic facts booklet

Quick . . . simple . . . and to the point.

In the Information Age, the above attributes become more important every day. You are inundated with information, and the very volume of material becomes an obstacle in finding the facts you really need to know.

Can't anyone just give you the basic facts on a subject?

Social Security, which affects nearly every working American and his or her family, has a booklet which does just that. Anyone who would like to know more about the basics of the Social Security system can request this small, 18-page booklet. It is written in reader-friendly language. It gives you basic information about Social Security's retirement, survivors and disability insurance programs, as well as some basic information on financial planning.

For example, one page explains how Social Security survivors insurance offers an average family about \$300,000 worth of protection. Another page quickly shows just how much an average wage earner can expect to receive in retirement benefits.

This small booklet also tells you what you can do to get more information about Social Security topics if you need it.

To get a copy of *Basic Facts About Social Security*, just call the toll-free number—**1-800-772-1213**.



Government agencies join forces to help seniors maximize opportunities

The Security Administration (SSA) and the Administration on Aging (AoA) recently signed a memorandum of understanding designed to improve the delivery of services to older Americans through improved coordination of each agency's respective programs.

The SSA/AoA goal is "to provide maximum opportunity for all older persons" to live independent, meaningful and dignified lives in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.

Today there are about 33 million Americans over the age of 65. Ninety-five percent of people aged 65 or over are currently receiving Social Security benefits, or will do so when they or their spouses retire.

The number of older Americans is increasing dramatically, and the fastest growing age cohort is the 85-and-over segment of the population. The increasing number of older Americans means that government agencies have had to become more innovative and work more closely together to provide needed services. And SSA and the AoA are among the federal agencies most responsive to senior citizen needs.

Through a network of State and Area Agencies on Aging, the AoA provides a wide array of elderly services, including transportation, day care, senior centers, homemaker services, home repair and rehabilitation, health promotion and fitness programs, nutrition services, legal assistance and advocacy.

Under the new Memorandum of Understanding, SSA will educate its employees, especially those in its network of approximately 1,300 field offices nationwide, about the comprehensive community services for older persons available through Area Agencies on Aging, as well as those currently under development. SSA also will help promote the visibility of State and Area Agencies on Aging, and assure that all inquiries received which go beyond the scope of SSA programs are referred to the appropriate Area Agency on Aging.

AoA is developing the informational materials for this effort. In addition, AoA will inform its network of offices about the agreement and encourage these agencies to work closely with SSA staff to further the purposes of the agreement.

Social Security supports Older Americans Month

May is Older Americans Month, and the theme for this year is *Aging: A Lifetime Opportunity*.

Commissioner of Social Security, Shirley S. Chater says, "Social Security stands with those who recognize the varied and valuable contributions of older Americans. And we also take this occasion to note that Social Security is proud of its role in helping to reduce poverty among the aged, and in helping them realize the many opportunities now possible for older Americans."

Commissioner Chater has noted that the Social Security program "protects us all against the economic ravages that can accompany old age. If Social Security did not exist, the poverty rate among older Americans would today be over 50 percent instead of the current 13 percent."

Social Security pays retirement benefits to more than 90 percent of Americans aged 65 and older. It is the main source of income for more than half the individuals and couples who draw it.

The second-fastest-growing type of American family is the "older" family. Their number has almost doubled in the past two decades. Even so, the rate of poverty for older Americans, as compared with other families, did not increase.

"Social Security is not a luxury. For many people, it is the barrier that separates them from poverty," says Commissioner Chater. Partially relieved of economic worries, many older Americans can open the door to opportunities that give luster to their golden years.

